

History of NATO Veterans of Canada --- as of 10 Aug 2015

Period 2009 to 2015 History of NATO Veterans of Canada ---

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and their accomplishments

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It soon became apparent that the NATO Vets was not just NATO since most of the Canadian Forces, especially the Canadian air and ground elements, had at one time been employed in a NATO role.

Additionally, many members had been involved in Peacekeeping missions while acting in secondary capacity as NATO reserves in Canada. From the very beginning NATO Vets represented navy, army and air force veterans from

WW2/Korea/peacekeeping /Gulf /Afghanistan and other special duty areas.

The year 2010 was spent recruiting members of the executive and organizing the new Ottawa HQ. However, before this task was completed, the New Veterans Charter, which had been passed in 2006, began to raise its ugly head. It immediately became apparent that the New Veterans Charter (NVC) had some very serious flaws. The first task was to learn and receive training in the NVC. This was accomplished by assistance from a long established fellow veterans organization, ANAVETS, and by liaison visits to Veterans Affairs Headquarters in Charlottetown, by NVOCs Director of Advocacy.

As a result of these actions and an analysis of the New Veterans Charter, NVOC was able to put together a policy paper on the shortfalls of the NVC and our recommendations for improvements. The paper was issued to VAC on 3 Feb 2011 .

Not much happened so

- on 1 Oct 2011 our first letter from NVOC was issued to the Minister VAC focusing on one issue to start :Long Term Care (in summary all the military hospitals were to be closed across Canada)
- 6 Nov 2011 NVOC issued a Press Release “Response to Enhancements Needed in NVC’ On the same date NVOC published a Paper “Plan on NVOC Advocacy – The Way Ahead”
- 2012 and 2013 NVOC wrote 4 letters to Minister of VAV/one to Minister of Finance/and a letter campaign where every sitting MP and Senator was written a letter of NVOV concerns with NVC. All the letters are available upon request with dates as well as responses.

The responses from the Ministers (in our brief 6 year existence NVOC has had three separate Ministers and the same number of VAC Deputy Ministers) were polite and prompt. However, it became apparent to NVOC and other moderate veteran organizations that nothing was going to be done “in immediate future” to address the missing parts of the New Veterans Charter. It also became increasingly apparent that the reason for the delay was that the Present Government was not willing to put money in the Budget to address these serious veterans issues.

On 14 November 2012 NVOC issued a Press Release “The Forgotten Generation of Veterans “This was a turning point as the House of Commons Standing Committee asked us on March 2014 to appear -along with other moderate veteran

organizations. This happened again in June 2014.

At the same time the Office of the Ombudsman as well as the other moderate veterans groups were advocating with a more coordinated were consistent in advocating for same issues.

Appearances before the Parliamentary Standing Committee

NVOC were invited on four occasions to appear before the Standing Committee to present our position on the New Veterans Charter and other associated Veteran's issues. On every occasion we presented our case and answered detailed questions on our position. Many of our recommendations appear in their report to Parliament.

Relationship With Veterans Affairs

NVOC has always maintained the importance of good working relationships with the staff of VAC; good personal relationships enhance reasonable and productive discussions.

In June 2011 VAC decided to hold semi-annual meetings with Veterans organizations; these were termed Stakeholders Meetings. Unfortunately these meetings became a forum for VAC to tell the stakeholders what they were doing; there was no opportunity for Veteran's Organizations to have input to the agenda. This resulted in some very heated exchanges over the years. It was not until the November 19th meeting at the Citadelle in Quebec City of the Stakeholders that the atmosphere began to improve. Many Veterans Organizations attributed this positive change to the new Deputy Minister, General (Ret'd) Walt Natzynczyk. This was the first time veterans had an input into the agenda and each stakeholder was given 5 minutes to state their concerns.

On April 14th, 2015 the new minister of Veterans affairs, Erin O'Toole, himself a veteran, conducted a "Stakeholders Summit" at the Canadian War Museum. This was without doubt the most positive development to date.

Legion Hosted Veterans Consultation Assembly

Also in 2011 the Headquarters of the Royal Canadian Legion began hosting Semi-annual meetings of veteran's organizations to discuss common problem areas. As with the Stakeholders meetings, 90 percent of the discussions focused on the shortcomings of the New Veterans Charter. In the past year the Veterans Consultation Assembly presented 15 recommendations to the Department of Veterans Affairs for inclusion in the amendments to the NVC. Unfortunately, the new Bill C-58 contains only portions of six of the 15 recommendations.

NATO VETERANS OF CANADA ORGANIZATION

NATO Vets has an Executive and a series of functional Committees. In addition we have a body of Senior advisors as well as a Patron, General Paul Manson, former Chief of the defence Staff. All member of the Executive are well experienced in their specific fields and all are long serving members with a vast array of backgrounds in the military. All are extremely dedicated to assisting the entire body of the Canadian veterans' community.

CONCLUSION

Although NATO Vets has existed in its present form and location for only six years, we have made tremendous strides in serving the Veterans' community. Our appearances before the Parliamentary Standing Committee, our contributions to the Stakeholders meetings and to the Veterans Consultation Assembly have all helped move the yard sticks to greater veterans benefits.

With our new and improved website and our improved recruiting program we are now able to reach and serve more members in a more efficient manner.

We must now strive to reach the newer generation of veterans, many who are in dire need of assistance and care.

STAKEHOLDERS MEETINGS

June 14, 2011,

Oct 24, 2011,

Feb 8/9 2012

March, 2013

Nov 19, 2014 - La Citadelle, PQ

Apr 14, 2015 - stakeholders Summit - Canadian War Museum

and their accomplishments

by Gord Lenkins- retiring Presiden as of this date of NVOC

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